change earned from exports during the same year was US $ 22 238 million (Rs. 69,751 crores). Principal commodities imported comprised items such as fertilisers, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, machinery, coal, coke and briquettes, organic and inorganic chemicals professional instruments and medicine and pharmaceutical products. The principal commodities exported during 1993-94 were plantation crops such as tea & coffee; agriculture & allied products comprising cereals, tobacco, spices, nuts and seeds, oil meals, processed foods, meat & meat preparations, marine products; ores & minerals, leather & manufactures; Gems & jewellery; sports goods; chemicals & related products; engineering goods; project goods; textiles; handicrafts; carpets; cotton raw including waste; and petroleum products.

Visit of Canadian Secretary of State

3116. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Canadian Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific has visited India in recent past;

(b) if so, the details thereof with purpose;

(c) whether he stressed the need for Indo-Canadian Cooperation in trade and business especially in power generation, telecommunications and environmental technology etc;

(d) whether he also indicated that Canada could provide world class technology to India and also invited the Indian industry to invest in Canada to take advantage of the North Ameria Free Trade Agreement to enter the markets of the United States, Mexico and Chils,

(e) whether Government propose to take some initiatives with regard to (c) and (d) to boost exports to new horizons o the world; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Mr. Raymand Chan, Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada visited India from 11th to 16th March 1995 accompanied by a large delegation including 34 representatives of Canadian business houses. Apart from calling on different Ministers in the Govt. of India and holding delegation level discussions with the Indian delegation, Mr. Chan also addressed various Industry Association.

(c) Yes. Sir.

(d) Mr. Chan invited Indian companies to take advantage of increased openings for joint ventures, technology partnerships and direct investments so that Canadian and Indian businesses can successfully penetrate each other's markets and also exploit opportunities in third markets.

(e) and (f) Intensification of private sector business interaction is likely to lead to further expansion of bilateral trade.

Cheaper trade routes to Central Asian Republics

3117. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to finalise arrangements for opening a cheaper trade route to Central Asian Republics through Bandar Abbas, a sea port in Iran;

(b) if so, the details thereof with objectives;

(c) whether Government also propose to develop an alternative airport for transportation of Indian goods in Central Asian Republics;

(d) if so, the details thereof with progress made in respect to part (a) above and estimated expenditure to be incurred with respect to (c);

(e) whether the arrangements will yield earning of huge amount of foreign exchange; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government is in the process of finalising arrangements for opening a cheaper transit trade route to the Central Asian Republics.

To examine the feasibility of a transit route, two study teams from the Ministry of Commerce visited Iran and Central Asian Republics in July 1993 and November 1994 respectively. The teams studied the existing infrastructure including quality and adequacy of rail, road and port facilities, transport linkages with neighbouring countries, customs and other regulatory procedures and warehousing facilities, and the possibility of fully operationalising the transit route in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The teams concluded that the trade route through Iran is viable, economical and faster. Subsequently, at the initiative of the Government, an MOU has been signed between the Government of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkmenistan on 18.4.1995 to facilitate smooth flow of trade between India and the Central Asian Republics through Iran.

(c) The Ministry is not aware of any such move.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) and (f) Utilisation of the transit route through Iran is likely to improve our trade with Central Asian Republics and may help reduce the freight component on Indian goods.

International Leather Goods Fair 1995

3118. SHRI HIPHEI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India Trade Promotion Organisation has organised International Leather Goods Fair, '95 in recent past at Calcutta;

(b) if so, the details thereof with names of countries which participated in it along with purpose for same;

(c) whether commercial benefits have been derived from this Fair;

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor;

(e) whether no such trade fair has been organised so far in any State Capital of North Eastern Region;

(f) whether Government propose to organise such trade fairs in North Eastern States in future; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. India Trade Promotion Organisation organised International Leather Goods Fair from March, 24—26, 1995 at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Calcutta.

(b) No foreign country participated in this fair as it was an export oriented event. The purpose of this fair was mainly to generate interaction between Indian exhibitors and foreign buyers and/or buying agents to enhance exports from the leather goods sector.

(c) Yes, Sir.